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Research Note

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WHY NOT USE BLUEPRINTS?

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ABSTRACT

Aerial photos and mosaics made from them are used as map substitutes on many field jobs. Blueprints from photographic negatives have been found to be equally useful and are far cheaper than the familiar photographic prints now in use.

Aerial photos and the photo maps or mosaics prepared from them have become working tools on many field jobs such as timber sales, road location, and firefighting. They make excellent map substitutes for orientation, annotations, and progress records. Although good quality contact prints are needed for office interpretation and direct measurement, they may not be required for fieldwork where the photo or mosaic is used merely as a map.

Research by numerous photographic supply firms has produced superior quality materials for reproducing mosaics and contact prints, both as negatives and as positives. But these top quality materials, though designed for stability and excellent detail, are not always necessary or even desirable. For example, they usually do not stand folding, some do not take pencil or ink, and they are often too expensive even when reproduced in quantity.

What the forester or other fieldman really needs is a reproduction comparable in cost and utility to the common blueline map he uses in such quantity, and he would prefer prints capable of being used stereoscopically.

Then, why not use blueprints?

Although blueprints produced from photographic negatives lack some definition found in the best photographic prints, they have been found to be quite satisfactory for many field uses.

They have distinct advantages:

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- They are cheap. The cost is no more than for any blueline map.

- They can be used stereoscopically (fig. 1) with the overlapping contact photo print. This allows the interpreter to make pencil annotations on cheap and readily reproduced blueprint copy.

- Their definition is better than that of halftones, and stereovision has not been reduced because of a dot-screen process.

- Large mosaics reproduced as blueprints can be rolled, folded, cloth backed, and generally handled as any other map.

Figure 1.--This stereopair was copied from a blueprint (left) and a photographic print (right). The original stereopair was entirely suitable for use under stereo.

They have some limitations:

- They lack stability and surface found in the best photo materials, but are no worse than any commonly used blueline map.

- Reproduction must be at contact size; therefore, if enlargements are needed, a copy negative must be made first at the desired scale.

Even these limitations can be avoided. For example, where area measurements are to be made, a positive can be printed on continuous tone film and a dry print process such as ozalid used to produce identical paper prints.

In summary, for many field jobs blueprint reproductions are not only cheaper, but more usable than the familiar aerial photos and mosaics.